EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
FACULTY MANUAL

PART VI

Teaching and Curriculum Regulations, Procedures, and Academic Program Development

SECTION III
Distance Education Policies
(Revised 6-18)

CONTENTS

Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority (i.e. more than 50%) of instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program. (The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges definition of "distance education".)

I.   Distance Education Courses and Programs
Programs offered via distance education shall be consistent with the mission of East Carolina University and the academic unit offering the courses or programs. There shall be no distinctions in academic rigor or content between programs offered through distance education and those offered on campus. Development of new online programs and courses will follow the same development and approval procedures as face-to-face programs and courses (Part VI). Selection of courses and programs to be offered via distance education is the purview of the offering academic unit. The academic units shall provide oversight of programs and courses delivered via distance education to ensure that each is coherent and complete and has learning outcomes appropriate to the level and rigor of the course or program.

II.   Oversight of Distance Education
The Office of the Provost shall ensure that academic units adhere to the distance education policies described in this section. The instructor assumes primary responsibility for ensuring the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction offered through distance education.

III.   Courses Delivered by Distance Education
The instructor teaching a distance education course shall have the same control of content and instruction as in face-to-face courses, consistent with university policies on instruction and academic freedom. Proposals for distance education courses shall be evaluated at the department or school, college and university level. The instructor, unit curriculum committees, and the unit administrator play a significant role in guiding the development and implementation of distance education courses. Only those proposals demonstrating suitable content and sufficient quality and rigor shall be approved.

Instructors develop syllabi for distance education courses consistent with the ECU Standards for Online Learning. These standards address learning objectives and other things necessary for student success in distance education courses. The structure of distance education courses and programs reflects consideration of the challenges of time management and the risk of attrition for students in these courses. Course design takes into consideration the need for and importance of interaction between instructors and students and among students.

IV.   Fostering Academic Integrity in Distance Education

Distance education courses, whether they are fully online or blended, pose new challenges in maintaining academic integrity for both faculty and students. Specifically, the ease of access provides a persistent temptation for students to access the work of others without providing appropriate attribution, or to search for an exam answer during a closed-book assessment. It is thus our shared responsibility to provide students with clear, unambiguous guidelines regarding the academic unit and university expectations for ethical behavior in the digital environment.

This document contains information and strategies to foster ethical behavior and academic integrity within online and blended courses. It is divided into two sections. The first section lists unique scenarios that a faculty member teaching an online class may encounter. The second section includes various strategies for effective online content delivery. As you evaluate each section you are encouraged to incorporate relevant suggestions drawn from the experiences of previous instructors and incorporate their solutions into your course materials.

V.   Instructor Preparation

All courses offered via distance education shall be taught by a qualified, credentialed instructor approved and assigned by the unit administrator. Instructor who teach distance education courses and programs shall have the same academic qualifications as instructors who teach face-to-face courses. Each instructor who teaches one or more distance education courses must complete a university training program. Academic units that wish to develop their own training program must use the university training program until their own training program is approved by the appropriate vice chancellor.

Unit administrators are responsible for ensuring that each instructor teaching distance education courses has the appropriate distance education training. All instructors teaching distance education courses will engage in at least one training activity each academic year that addresses advances in the methodologies and technologies used in distance education. Training is documented in the faculty annual report of each instructor teaching one or more distance education courses. The unit administrator will provide a complete list of instructors teaching distance education courses and documentation that each instructor has met the training requirements annually to the Provost's office.

Instructors teaching a distance education course have access to consultation, implementation, and evaluation support from appropriate supporting units (i.e. Office of Faculty Excellence, IPAR, college Instructional Support Consultants, library services, Information Technology and Computing Services, Information Resources Coordinating Council, Distance Education and Learning Technology Committee, etc.). The University shall provide appropriate equipment, software, and communications access to instructors necessary to provide effective distance education. The University will ensure the availability of continuing instructor education and training to enhance proficiencies in the methodology and the technologies used in distance education.

VI.   Standards for Online Learning
Distance education courses shall comply with the following ECU Standards for Online Learning.

Course Overview & Introduction
- The syllabus is easy to navigate and follows a consistent format that introduces the course and its structure and states expectations. The syllabus should be available in a downloadable format for offline reference.
- Course instructors introduce themselves.
- An appropriate format (e.g. discussion board) should be used to allow students to introduce themselves to each other and to the instructor.
- Minimum technology hardware, software, and skills required by the student are clearly stated and resources for technology training are listed.
- Prerequisite knowledge is clearly stated.

Learning Objectives
- The learning objectives are clearly stated and describe measurable outcomes.
- The learning objectives address content mastery and critical thinking ability.
- Clear instructions for achieving course objectives and learning outcomes are provided.

Assessment & Measurement
- Evaluation methods measure the achievement of course objectives and learning outcomes and are appropriate for the online learning environment.
- Course evaluation, policies, learner feedback are appropriate for the online learning environment.
- Course instructors should utilize a controlled testing environment as appropriate.

Resources & Materials
- The course instructional materials, resources, and content have sufficient depth and breadth for the student to achieve learning outcomes.
- The course instructional materials, resources, and content are accessible, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant, and available in multiple formats when appropriate.
- The course instructor makes students aware of relevant resources and services at the university, college, department, and course level (e.g. library resources, Online Writing Center, and Pirate Academic Success Center).

Learner Interaction
- The course provides opportunities for interaction between the instructor and the student, and among students as appropriate.
- Activities designed to generate student interaction align with course objectives and learning outcomes.
- Clear standards are established for course interactions, instructor response time, and instructor availability (turn-around time for email, grade posting, online office hours, etc.)

Course Technology
- Instructional tools support the learning objectives of the course and are integrated with course material.

- Instructional tools enhance learning activities and guide the student to become a more active learner.
- Instructional tools required for this course are clearly defined and easily attained.

Accountability
- The syllabus or supportive course materials include required statements per the Faculty Manual (Part VI, Section I. Teaching Regulations and Guidelines Related to Faculty).

VII.   Evaluation of Distance Education

Instructors teaching through distance education will be peer reviewed to assure the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction. Instruction in distance education courses shall be evaluated according to the instruction evaluation procedures in effect for face-to-face courses with appropriate additions consistent with the delivery method, including use of the University Peer Review Instrument for Online Learning or an approved Peer Review Instrument developed by the academic unit. Units that wish to develop their own Peer Review Instrument must use the university instrument until their own instrument is approved by the appropriate vice chancellor. Peer reviewers will be selected based on criteria determined by the faculty of the college, school or department.

Student opinion of instruction will be evaluated through an online evaluation specific for distance education courses approved by the Faculty Senate and the chancellor and administered through the Office of Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research.

Each distance education academic degree program shall be assessed in the same manner and the same frequency as the unit's assessment of academic programs offered on campus. The unit administrator shall review assessment results with assigned instructors and the departmental faculty to facilitate the continual enhancement of the unit's distance education program. (FS Resolution #16-31, May 2016; FS Resolution #18-43, May 2018)